

## Summer, 1972—Continued

Now the child glances quickly at the man, as if to reassure herself of his presence. He really, finally, has taken her fishing, she reminds herself. Just her, and not the boys this time. The joy wraps her in itself, folding around her in a warm hug. There are so many obstacles to overcome. The boys had such an easy relationship with him, but it seemed to be more difficult for her. This was a good day for them.

Like the long grasses at the water's edge, the child received her strength from her roots, and yet was unaware of the importance of those roots to her survival. And this man who was responsible for her being, her roots, what was the source of his strength? As the drops fall from above, causing the ripples to spread over the surface, so the man's strength comes from above as the water of the Spirit, which moves over the earth in ever-widening circles, nourishing those it reaches, giving them life. Should he no longer receive this life-giving power, he too would begin to wither, until he had no strength either for himself or for those dependent upon him. And finally both he and they, like the deprived grasses, would become empty, dry husks with no reason for being.

But this is the nature of nurturing, and of patterns which appear and disappear, changing in form and function as time and circumstance demand. As a new leaf emerges, it appears to be nearly indistinguishable from others of its kind. The casual observer would be unable to determine what its character would become. Tender and vulnerable, damage at this early stage could maim it for life. It is lovely in its newness. As it grows it will be shaped by the care it receives and the elements brought to bear upon it, as well as the forces of its own nature. When fully grown, the leaf functions as an integral part of the whole, yet remains an individual leaf accomplishing its work and producing nourishment for others of its kind. In time, age will reduce some to wrinkled, ragged shells waiting to be released, to return to the soil from which they came. Others may lose their freshness and vigor as the life-sap slows, but a striking loveliness remains, dignity accumulated over a lifetime. There is sadness in knowing this, too, will be destroyed in time, but it has left behind the legacy of having enriched those with whom it came into contact, who have shared in the wealth of its living.

Strengthened by the legacy of the past, the child will come into full bloom, repeating old patterns, but adding her own rich, new embellishments.

—Eunice Roehl, *Messiah, Eau Claire, WI*

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All submissions should be sent to Abby Matzke. All subscription information should be sent to Tina Eichstadt.

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## The Branches Magazine

### Formerly *Women In Fellowship*

Greetings to all of our sisters in Christ! What you hold in your hand at this moment is the premier issue of *The Branches* magazine, formerly *Women in Fellowship*. Our aim is to draw our lives and fellowship closer together by sharing thoughts and information in the form of writing. These writings are by you—confessional Lutheran women—to the glory of God. As Christians, sharing insights, reflections, memories, and more will strengthen each other in our respective walks with our God-given talents.

The title of this work is reflective of you also. As Christians, we are each a branch to the Vine, as Jesus describes in John 15:5: "I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." In keeping with the title, the theme of this first issue is that of "the branches."

The original goal of *Women In Fellowship* was to "encourage the women of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) in...spiritual fellowship, unity of purpose as we seek to serve God and His people, and companionship" (Vol. 2, No. 1). With this revival of past efforts, the purpose has not changed. Our endeavors to enrich each of our lives with the knowledge of God and His will through the study of His Word, to look to the Father for all direction, to use our talents to His glory, and to seek fellowship with like-minded individuals for comfort and support, have all remained intact as our future goals.

We hope to expand this publication to sixteen pages. One of our objectives is to include articles from all corners of the CLC, including writings from the largest of the congregations to the smallest—and we aim not to forget the mission congregations and preaching stations! This also means that we are aiming to include all ages of women also—from the eldest to the youngest. This first issue is only a bud of the blossom which is to come. It depends on you where we "grow" from here.

Read on...and enjoy!

—Abby Matzke, *St. Peter's, Stambaugh, MI*

***"I am the Vine, you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears  
much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."***

—John 15:5

## Vine and Branches

Vine and Branches-blessed are we  
Joined to Christ eternally.  
Jesus' love and sacrifice  
Gives our fruit the gift of life.

Rooted by His sacred Word,  
Pruned for strength as we have heard,  
Watered by baptismal grace,  
Nourished at His supper place.

We're the branches, blessed indeed,  
Sharing all we have as 'seed,'  
Reaching out to those we love,  
Till we reach our home above.

—Jacquelyn Radichel, *Grace, Fridley, MN*



## A Look Ahead

### Themes for *The Branches* 2004-2005

#### "A Few of My Favorite Things"

Upcoming themes for the remainder of this year's publications are decided! With three issues remaining, we are looking for articles on your "favorites." Reflections on your favorite Bible verses and characters, your favorite hymns and songs, and your favorite memories and stories are sought for the October 2004, January 2005, and April 2005 issues, respectively. Send to: Abby Matzke, P.O. Box 238, Stambaugh, MI, 49964, or email to [abby\\_matzke@yahoo.com](mailto:abby_matzke@yahoo.com).

### Departments for *The Branches*

**Congregation & Location**—Articles describing congregations and their areas from all corners of God's creation.

**Delicious Dishes**—Recipes for small and large gatherings, those with special dietary needs, and more.

**News & Notes**—Reports of recent events by those in attendance. Also, announcements and invitations to women for events and happenings from all over our synod.

**Tips & Advice**—Wisdom and knowledge from experience in hobbies, finances, education, and many other areas.

**Women of Faith**—Meet women sharing our walk by peeking into their daily lives or hearing tales of their past.

**Letters to the Editor**—Opinions concerning past articles and much more!

## Tips & Advice

As fellow Christians we each have exceptional talents given by God that we can share with others. There is a wealth of information our brothers and sisters of the faith can impart that will benefit and strengthen us all. Over the years, there has been talk of compiling a list of "experts" of varied vocations and avocations that may be willing to act as resources for those in our fellowship. If you or a family member would be willing to share your skill and expertise in any way, please contact Abby Matzke, P.O. Box 238, Stambaugh, MI 49964, or email to [abby\\_matzke@yahoo.com](mailto:abby_matzke@yahoo.com). A resource list will be created, and some of those on the list may be asked to write a brief column in their area or answer a question individually to requests that we may receive.

If experts from certain fields are requested, we will attempt to find one in that particular calling. If you are searching for an answer to a particular question, please contact us at the same address. If the question is theological in nature, please direct it to your pastor.

## The Gardener's Vine & Branches

Just picture a beautiful garden with flowers in all different colors, and healthy plants that couldn't get much better. However, in order to keep a garden beautiful and healthy, you need a gardener. A gardener waters the sprouts and plants everyday, weeds them, prunes them, and eventually reaps the rewards of his hard work. Our Christian life is much the same. Jesus speaks about our relationship with Him in John 15. Jesus is the Vine, and God the Father is the Gardener. We are the branches that grow from the Vine. Without the life source of the Vine, and the care that a gardener gives, we would not survive. Our daily walk through life in school, work, and maturing as Christians, presents many opportunities for our branches to grow. In order for us to grow stronger, however, the gardener sometimes finds it necessary to prune us, through trials and hardships in our daily lives. Sickness, hurt, disappointment, and troubles may seem very difficult while we are enduring them, but God uses them to help increase our faith and the fruits of our daily walk with God. If we look out into the world, we see other branches as well. There are other branches that are also growing in God, and need protection and encouragement. As good Christian neighbors and fellow branches of the Vine, we need to help them along the way, as well as plant the seed for new branches to grow.

—Meghan Eichstadt, *Messiah, Hales Corners, WI*  
and Sam Priebe, *Living Word, Kansas City, MO*

## A Time to Laugh...

One day my son brought me a calculator with dead batteries. He asked me to fix it. I said, "I can't. It needs new batteries."

He replied, "Can't we just put some more whack in them?"

"More what?" I asked.

"Whack!" He responded. "They need more whack!"

"Who told you that?"

"Mom did. She told me that the batteries were out of whack!"

—Rev. Joel Fleischer,  
*Calvary, Marquette, MI*

## Summer, 1972

Smooth, still, the lake's surface reflects the pattern of the opposite shore. Closer by, a moving, rhythmic pattern is constantly reshaped as water bugs skim the surface. On the nearby bank, a downy woodpecker braces itself against a tree trunk, each feather exactly in place, forming patterns both utilitarian and intricately beautiful. On the ground beneath, a wildflower faces the rising sun, from which it seems to draw its color. Its petals arrange themselves in an overlapping pattern echoing that of the bird's feathers. Its leaves climb the stem in strictly preordained order.

A dark bank of clouds moves in ominously, as though battling with the sun for dominance of the sky. Gradually, the warming rays are blocked out. A drop of rain falls to earth, reaches the lake's surface and blends quickly, leaving as evidence only a ring which spreads outward until it, too, is seen no more. As the ring reaches the shore, the tall grasses nod their acceptance; this is the way of things. They take for granted their lush deep-green, accepting nonchalantly the nourishment sent up from the roots embedded deeply in the moist soil. Little they know or care of the days ahead.

Should the drops no longer fall, should the soil dry out, should those roots cease to nourish them, they would grow brown and withered, their graceful swaying reduced to a stiff, awkward rustle. They would become lifeless things, useless, pointless.

Near the edge of the lake a child sits fishing, legs folded under her, dark ponytails made darker by the falling drops. With intense concentration she waits for the jerk of the bobber, her worm-stained hands holding tightly to the pole. She rests on a spot of land worn grassless by the feet of countless fishermen who've come before her, filled with the same anticipation. A short distance away, a man casts slowly, almost without a sound, as though unwilling to disturb the quiet unnecessarily.

(Continued on back page)

## Delicious Dishes

Both of these recipes are taken from the *St. Peter's Lutheran Church's 2004 cookbook*.

*Emma's famed recipe comes from the roots...*

### German Potato Salad

3 lb. potatoes	1 large onion
1 lb. bacon	1 c. apple cider vinegar
1 c. sugar	1 c. water

salt and pepper

Cook potatoes with peelings on. When done, drain and peel while warm. Cut bacon up in small pieces and fry until almost done-not too dark. Drain off some bacon grease before adding the chopped onion. Fry until almost done, then add water, vinegar, and sugar. Bring to a boil. Thicken with a flour and water mixture as you would gravy. Slice potatoes. Layer, alternating with thickened bacon mixture. Best if refrigerated overnight and reheated the next day, when the potatoes have absorbed the flavor.

—Emma Abrahamson, *St. Peter's, Stambaugh, MI*

*While Irene's comes from the fruit of the branches...*

### Apple Dapple Cake

1 c. egg substitute	3 c. flour
2 c. sugar	1 tsp. baking soda
2 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract	1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
3 c. diced apples	1/2 c. nuts, chopped
1 1/2 c. apple sauce	1/2 tsp. salt (opt.)

with cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray a 9 × 13" pan. Combine egg and sugar; beat 2 minutes. Add remaining dry ingredients. Fold in applesauce, apples, and nuts. Spread into sprayed pan. Bake for 45 minutes. Almost fat free!

#### Glaze: (optional)

2 Tbsp. cornstarch	3/4 c. skim milk
3/4 c. brown sugar	1 1/2 tsp. vanilla

Mix together and spread on top of apple cake.

—Irene Collins, *St. Peter's, Stambaugh, MI*

